# Community Garden Inventory Research

## *Research Objective*

To compile baseline information about community gardens from around the world that will be shared through the online Community Garden Inventory.

## *Research Questions*

- What types of plants are growing in the community garden?
- What structures (for example, casitas, compost bins) are present in the garden?
- What activities take place in the garden?

## *Why is the Community Garden Inventory Research Important?*

Community gardens are important places for people and their communities. People grow food, meet and talk with friends, play games, relax, enjoy nature, exercise, and watch concerts and other cultural events in community gardens. Many gardens host educational tours and workshops. People who help plan and manage the gardens often gain valuable skills in community organizing. In many urban neighborhoods, these may be the only sites where people are able to enjoy these activities and learn these skills.

Community gardens are on land that is owned by a public or private landowner. In some cases, the landowner has to weigh the benefits of preserving the garden versus building more housing or stores, or other land uses. The more information we have about the role gardens serve in communities, the better decisions we can make about preserving them.

Baseline information about gardens also is useful to scientists who conduct research on urban gardens. Researchers from an array of disciplines work in community gardens, including sociologists, anthropologists, nutritionists, soil scientists, and agricultural scientists. Their research interests are varied and include food security, urban migration, and soil contamination.

# Community Garden Inventory Science Learning

The Community Garden Inventory is a great opportunity for youth to learn about two aspects of science:

- Inquiry, or "doing science," and
- Content, which includes facts and concepts.

## *Inquiry*

If you follow the instructions for conducting the Community Garden Inventory ***i·m·science investigation***, youth will learn the following inquiry skills.

### *Inquiry Learning Objectives*

Youth will:

- Define questions to ask the gardener.
- Apply interview skills to learn about the garden.
- Apply observational skills to learn about the garden.
- Synthesize information they gather onto a data form.
- Submit their data electronically.

## *Content*

You can use the Garden Mosaics Science Pages to help the youth learn more about the plants and concepts they encounter in the garden. For example, if the youth find gardeners growing collards and want to know more about them, you can refer to the *Collards* Science Page. If you anticipate unfamiliar concepts or terms will come up during the Community Garden Inventory, you can have the youth read and conduct the activities on the relevant Science Pages before going to the garden.

You can also use "teachable moments" in the garden to explain unfamiliar concepts to the youth. For example, if the gardener talks about a compost pile, you may need to explain what compost is. Also encourage the youth to ask follow-up questions about what they see. For example, the gardeners may point out a water collection system. Encourage the youth to ask the gardeners to explain how the system works and how they water the plants.

With your guidance and using the Science Pages, you can expect youth conducting the Community Garden Inventory to learn the following content.

***Content Learning Objectives***
Youth will learn about:

- Plants, structures, and activities that take place in the garden.
- Physical, biological, and ecological science concepts related to the plants.

## Community Garden Inventory Assessment

| *Inquiry Learning Objectives* | *Evidence of Learning* |
|---|---|
| Youth will:<br>• Define questions to ask the gardener.<br>• Apply interview skills to learn about the garden.<br>• Apply observational skills to learn about the garden.<br>• Synthesize information they gather onto a data form.<br>• Submit their data form electronically. | The **list of interview questions** that youth create and notes from the interview planning discussion are evidence of youth's ability to define questions.<br><br>**Written notes and the completed Community Garden Inventory form** are evidence that youth were able to apply their interview skills and synthesize the information gathered. |
| *Content Learning Objectives* | *Evidence of Learning* |
| Youth will learn about:<br>• Plants, structures, and activities that take place in the garden.<br>• Physical, biological, and ecological science concepts related to the plants. | The **initial discussion about community gardens** should give you an idea of what youth know about community gardens prior to the Community Garden Inventory.<br><br>The **completed Community Garden Inventory form and photos** taken by youth provide a summary of the information youth collected about garden plants, structures, and activities.<br><br>The **puzzles and other activities on the Science Pages** help to assess youth learning about specific concepts. |

## Additional Assessment Tools

***Participation***

To generate a summary of what youth and other participants did, **record number of:**

- **youth** participants,
- **gardeners** who participate and name of garden,
- **educators or volunteers** who participate and their affiliation.

Also save the **list of interview questions, notes from the hike, and a copy of the completed Community Garden Inventory form**.

***Notes and photos***

This will help you remember important learning moments during the activity.

- During the hike and interviews, **notice the youths' interview skills and interactions with the gardeners**. Are they able to obtain the information needed to complete the inventory form? Do they ask follow-up questions? Do they ask new questions based on their own interest in a particular aspect of the garden?
- **Use a camera** to document the hike and interview(s). You may already be using a camera to take photos of plants and structures in the garden, but you can also take pictures of the youth as they conduct the activity.

***Garden calendar***

Youth can use the information collected during the Community Garden Inventory to create a calendar of events taking place in the garden. They can include dates of planting and harvest for different crops, and social, cultural, recreational, and educational activities. A completed calendar provides evidence of the youths' ability to synthesize the information gained from the activity, as well as learning about the activities that take place in the garden.

***Garden map***

Have youth use what they learn to make a map of the garden. They can show the gardeners' plots, what's growing, watering systems, compost piles, tool sheds, casitas, picnic tables, and so on. The completed map provides evidence of learning about plants, planting practices, and the community aspects of the garden. The map can be laminated and posted in the garden or community center, or added to a scrapbook.